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*1871*  
**Christian LIBERTY,**

Founded in Gospel

**TRUTH;**

Or, The GREAT

**ARGUMENT**

ON

**Christian LIBERTY,**

EXPLAINED

In its necessary Connection with sound Principles, in Opposition to some dangerous NOTIONS relating to both.

IN A

**SERMON**

UPON

**JOHN viii. 32.**

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By C. MASTERTOUN, M. A.

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THE



ARGUMENT

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NOTION OF  
IN Obedience to some  
In the necessary Connection with some

SERMON

ON  
JOHN VIII. 32.

BY  
A. C. MASTERSTON, M. A.

EDINBURGH:  
Printed by Robert Brown, and sold  
in the Hall by Mr. Adam Smith, in the  
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[ 1 ]  
TO THE  
R E A D E R.

Christian Reader,

**W**hen I published the Book entitled Gospel-Truth and Holiness, I intimated in an Advertisement that this Sermon came to my Hand, after that Book was printed off, except the Title Page and Preface; but that I might take some Notice of it in this Book, now published, I thought indeed, at first, only to have offered some brief View of it; but when I came to set my self to that Work, I found, I should have been in Hazard to have injured the Author, by mangling his Work, and therefore I determined to publish it completely; because I found so many excellent Things in it, which I conceived, did not only clear and confirm what I have been essaying both in the former Book, and this; but likewise what is very suitable in our Day, wherein many are too much inclin'd to give Way to their wild Concoits about divine Truths, under the specious Pretext of christian Liberty.

In Opposition to this, the R. Author makes it evident, that Christian Liberty is founded in Gospel-Truth. He shews, that divine Truths are according to Godliness; that they have a Connection with divine Precepts; that they are the rational Principles, on which our reasonable Service is founded; that having such a necessary Connection with Practice, they must be of equal Necessity with the Precepts of Christianity, which have a Subordination one to another as Stones in a regular Building; that therefore such Principles which have this Connection with Practice must be revealed; that the Knowledge of the Truth which makes us free, is not a mere Form of Knowledge; but that it is real in

## To the Reader.

*Opposition to that which is imaginary; that it is certain in Opposition to that which is wavering, and that it is experimental, and practical.*

*The Author also shews what Freedom it is that is consequent in this Knowledge of the Truth, that it is not a Liberty to embrace Error, or, to act in pursuance of an erroneous Conscience; but, a Freedom to that which is good and well-pleasing to God, that by it, we are free'd from the Dominion of Sin, of Satan, and of the World, in its Snares and Inticements; and from the Dominion of Men over our Faith and Consciences; that by this Gospel-Truth, we are free'd from the Law not as a Rule of Life, but as a Covenant of Works which gendreth Bondage: And finally, that we are free'd from the Sting of Death, then he shews, what we are free'd unto, both with Respect to many Duties and Privileges, which I cannot enumerate in this short Pretace. He shews, that there is a Freedom to the Performances of the Duties of Religion, a Freedom of Access, and that the Knowledge of the Truth, resolvetb in christian Liberty, consisting in the Mind's Complacency in its own Choice, of what is good; and that the Freedom of a Christian in his religious Obedience is founded in the Conformity of his Sentiments to divine Revelation.*

*And from the Whole, he draws several practical Inferences.*

*Now, by this short View of the Scope of this Sermon, you may see what Affinity is hath to these Books I have published. And I hope nothing shall be found in it contrary to the Term of sound Words. And that all into whose Hands it may come, may reap spiritual Benefit by it, is and shall be the earnest Prayer of,*

Edinburgh, May 17

1727



WILLIAMSON





## JOHN viii. 32.

*And ye shall know the Truth,  
and the Truth shall make  
you free.*



**T**HESE Words are a part  
of the Conference which  
our Saviour had with the  
Jews, especially these of  
them who to there own  
Advantage had been im-  
press'd with the gracious  
Words which proceeded  
out of his Mouth. *Verse*  
*30 of this Chapter, As he spake these Words,*  
*many believed on him.* Not by their own natu-  
ral Ability, but by Christ's efficacious Grace.  
He that spake to the Ear, caused his Word to  
reach the Heart; Christ himself that planted  
and watered, gaye also the Increase, he took  
particular Care of these new Converts, he would  
not neglect the bruised Reed, nor the smoking  
Flax. *He carrys the Lambs in his Bosom, and*  
*leads them gently that are with Young.* These

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Plants of his right Hand's planting, he takes Care to Water with seasonable Counsel and Warning, he apprifeth them of the Danger of Apostacy, he sets before them the Character of a sincere Disciple and Follower of himself, he is one that is constant in his just Regard to the Word and Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, to such he maketh Promise, that by the powerful teaching of his own Spirit, they shall know the TRUTHS of the Gospel, and thereby shall be possessed of a glorious Liberty peculiar to the Children of GOD.

THE Scope of these Words is to convince the Jews, that by their Ignorance of the Gospel, they are in a State of Bondage; and that it was by the saving Knowledge of the Doctrine of Christ, that they were to be set at Liberty from their grievous Thralldom: To encourage these of 'em who by the Grace of GOD had attain'd to any Measure of that Knowledge of the TRUTH, to expect that they should be made to increase in such Knowledge, by the Means whereof they should be blessed with a proportionable Increase of Enlargement and Freedom, in the Service of GOD.

THE Doctrine then that is plainly taught in this Text by our blessed LORD, is to this Purpose, That *Gospel-Liberty is founded in Gospel-TRUTH*, or *Christian-Liberty* is necessarily connected with the Knowledge and Persuasion of the Truth, as it is in Jesus.

IN treating this Subject, I will observe the following Method. 1<sup>st</sup>. Enquire what is the TRUTH the Knowledge whereof maketh free.

2<sup>dly</sup>, WHAT Knowledge of the Truth maketh free.

3<sup>dly</sup>, WHAT Freedom is it that is Consequent upon this Knowledge of the Truth.

4<sup>thly</sup>, How

4thly, Now this Knowledge of the Truth is subservient to Christian-Liberty.

As to the first Head of Discourse, viz. What is the Truth, the Knowledge whereof maketh free. I Answer, There is a twofold Acceptation of TRUTH, it is either taken for Sincerity or Uprightness, as in *Psa. li. 6. Behold, thou desirest Truth in the inward Parts*: Eph. iv. 25. *Wherefore putting away Lying, speak the Truth every Man with his Neighbour*. Rom. ix. 1. *I say the Truth in Christ, I Lie not, my Conscience also bearing me Witness in the Holy Ghost*. This is the peculiar Characteristick of the Sincerity of a regenerate Person, that he speaks the Truth in Christ, under the Influence and Direction of the holy Spirit of Truth.

2dly, TRUTH is taken for the Doctrine of the Gospel, considered as it is in it self agreeable to the Mind of GOD, as in *Gal. ii. 5. That the Truth of the Gospel might continue with you*; or considered as it is duly understood and believed by Men; and then Truth is no other than a Conformity betwixt our Sentiments and the Mind of GOD, reveal'd in the Gospel.

ACCORDING to the first Acceptation of TRUTH, it is oppos'd to Lying or Hypocrisy, for it is the essential Character of the Children of GOD, *that they are Children that will not Lie*, Isa. lxiii. 8. *Israelites indeed, in whom there is no Guile*. According to the second Acceptation of TRUTH, it is oppos'd to Error. And it is a Representation of Facts, or the Nature of Things as they are in themselves, and in strict Conformity to what is determin'd concerning them, by divine Revelation; TRUTH then is our joining of Things together,



ther, or disjoining them in our Thoughts, as they are joined or disjoined in the holy Scripture; our affirming what is deny'd by the Spirit of God in his Word: The Mind of GOD is the great Exemplar of TRUTH, for it is absolutely impossible that he can Lie, or be Mistaken, concerning himself, or the Creatures; and therefore, all the divine Oracles, or the Decisions of his Word, are right concerning all Things, *Psal. cxix. 128.*

O U R blessed LORD in his Conversation with Pontius Pilate, told him, *That for this End he came into the World, even to bear Witness to the Truth.* John xviii. 37. That is, The Truth of all the Scripture, as it related to himself, as the promised *Messiah*, this is the Truth as it is in Jesus, *Eph. iv. 21.* The Truth that runs thro' the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which is a sure Word of Prophecy; the Truth that is inseparable from every Word of God. *Sanctify them* (saith our Saviour) John xvii. 17. *through thy Truth, for thy Word is Truth.* It is a first Principle, that what ever is spoken by an infinitely perfect Being, must necessarily be true, and therefore all the History, the Doctrine, the Precepts, the Threatnings, and the Promises of the BIBLE, must all of them be Truth.

F O R the farther Illustration of this Head of Discourse, I will offer a few Observations concerning Scripture-Truths.

1<sup>st</sup>. I observe, that their general Character is, that they are according to Godliness; That is, they have a Connection with divine Precepts; one way or other they affect Virtue or Vice, containing Arguments in them to enforce the former, and to deter from the latter.

1 Tim.



1 Tim. vi. 3. *If any Man teach otherways, and consent not to wholesome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness. Tit. i. 1. According to the Faith of God's Elect, and the acknowledging of the Truth, which is after Godliness. Thus it is said of the System of divine Truths, 2 Tim. iii. 16. All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.* Thus it is said of the most sublime Mysteries of the Christian Religion, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *And without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness.* The Doctrines of the Scripture are no other than the rational Principles upon which all our reasonable Service and Obedience to God must be founded, the Faith of God's Elect, which is the Faith of the Operation of God, is the Patent and Principle of the Godliness of their Conversation: Yea, every Precept of the Scripture, must first be the Object of our Beliet and Persuasion, before it can be the Object of our Choice and Practice; and therefore, they who tell us, It is no matter what Mens Principle and Persuasion are concerning Religion, if their Conversation be blameless and exemplary, they seem to forget the necessary Order of Things establish'd by the infinitely wise Author of our Nature. As Man is a rational Creature, he cannot perform an Action morally Good, but upon the due Conviction of the Truth of some Principle, which determines him to do it. If a Man be a sincere Lover of God, he must be influenc'd to the Exercise of that Love, by a due Persuasion of the infinite and incomparable Amiableness of the divine Nature: In Order to our receiving

ceiving and resting upon *Jesus Christ*, for eternal Salvation, we must firmly believe what the Scripture reveals concerning his Person and Offices as our glorious Redeemer, if we would perform the Offices of Justice and Charity to our Neighbour, we must be persuaded of the reasonableness of these Maxims of Equity and Beneficence. It seems to be plain from what I have observed, that Scripture-Doctrines are not Speculative in their own Nature; 'tis true, Men may Treat them Speculatively, that is, they may consider them abstractedly from the Connection they have with Christian Practice, but such as rest in the meer Contemplation of Christian Doctrines, they use them contrary to their original Design, which is to promote a holy Life, a Conformity to the divine Image, both in our Minds and Manners.

ally, I observe, That as divine Truths have a necessary Connection with Practice, they must be of equal Necessity with the Precepts of Christianity, with which they are so connected, as it is necessary to believe in the Lord *Jesus Christ* for Righteousness and Redemption, so it must be equally necessary, to believe that he is the proper Object of our absolute Affiance, that is, that he is the true and independant God, in the highest and strictest Sense, in which the Word God is taken in the holy Scripture, for absolute Trust and Dependance, is one Instance of Worship, due only to the only true God: It seems therefore to be a just Way of judging of the Importance of Scripture-Doctrines, to judge of them according to the Importance of these Precepts with which they are connected, and as any Principle hath a natural Tendency to promote a holy

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Disposition of Mind, and a regular Conversation, it is to be regarded as proportionably important.

'Tis true, all the Precepts of the Gospel are necessary and important in one Degree or another, yet comparatively speaking, they are not equally momentous, some of 'em are absolutely necessary for the very Being of a Christian as such, others of 'em are necessary only to sundry Degrees of a Christian's Well-being; our Saviour speaks of the first and great Commandment, of loving the LORD our GOD with all our Heart, and the Second, which is like unto it, of loving our Neighbour as our selves. He speaks also of the least of his Commandments in *Math. v. 19*. As there is a different Importance of Precepts, so there is of Principles and Doctrines of the Gospel; The Apostle to the *Heb. v. 12* speaks of the first Principles of the Oracles of God, which in the first Verse of the next Chapter, he calls the Foundation Principles: Whence it is evident to me, there is no more Reason for using the Distinction of essential and unessential, with respect to Articles of Faith, then with respect to Scripture-Precepts.

3<sup>dly</sup>, I observe, that the Precepts of the Gospel have a Subordination one of 'em to another, as some Writers express it, like Stones in the Wall of a regular Building, they are so coherent with, and dependant upon one another, that one of them cannot be removed, but the Building either suffers in its Usefulness or Ornament, hence it is that the Apostle *Peter*, 2 *Pet. i. 5, 6, 7*. enjoyns to give all Diligence, add to your Faith *Virtue*, to *Virtue*, *Knowledge*, to *Knowledge*, *Temperance*, to *Temperance*,



*perance, Patience, to Patience, Godliness, to God-*  
*liness, brotherly Kindness, to brotherly Kindness,*  
*Charity.* So there is likewise a Harmony and  
 Dependance among the Truths of the Gos-  
 pel, which as the several Stones of a Wall,  
 lean upon one another, and the whole Super-  
 structure leans upon the Foundation, the Doc-  
 trines of the Gospel 2 Tim. ii. 13. are called the  
 Form of sound Words; upon the Account of  
 their Dependance on each other, this is called  
 by antient Protestant Writers, the ANALOGY  
 of Faith, which some think is intended by  
 the Apostle, Rom. xii. 6. *Let us Prophecy ac-*  
*ording to the Proportion of Faith:* In the  
 original Language it is the ANALOGY of  
 Faith; that is, a Collection of plain and im-  
 portant Doctrines of Christianity, placed in  
 a due Coherence with each other; the several  
 Articles of Faith are proportioned to one  
 another; it makes the Wall the stronger, the  
 more exactly every Stone is form'd and inlaid  
 with another; in like Manner the Spirit of  
 Wisdom and Revelation, hath proportion'd  
 and plac'd the Truths of the Gospel so, that  
 they are said to be fitly spoken, they are fit-  
 ted to one another, and all of 'em are fitted  
 to the great End of making the Man of GOD,  
 and every Child of GOD, perfect in every good  
 Word and Work; and every one of the lesser  
 Truths are proportionably important as they  
 are placed in the Scripture, less or more near  
 to the fundamental Doctrines and Precepts of  
 the Gospel. I can't therefore be reconcil'd  
 to their way of Writing upon this Subject,  
 who represent all unessential Doctrines of the  
 Scripture, as if they were Matters of Chris-  
 tian-Liberty, and mere Indifference, the same  
 Way



Way as the Difference of Meats and Days in the Apostles Times, was left to every Man's Discretion, to act according to the Persuasion of his own Mind, while it was of little Moment whether their Persuasion was upon one Side of the Question or the other; but we are assured from the Word of God, that Scripture-Truths, tho' not strictly fundamental, yet they are the Truths which are after Godliness, and consequently, unless any Instance of Godliness can be judged a Matter of Indifference, no more can the Doctrines which are according to Godliness, be reck'ned to be of indifferent Moment, *He (says our Saviour) who breaketh the least of my Commandments, shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven, Matth. v. 19.* And by an evident Consequence, he that despiseth the least of these Scripture-Doctrines, upon which those Precepts are founded, must be obnoxious to the same Penalty.

4thly, I observe, That as any religious Principles have a necessary Connection with Christian Practice, or our eternal Salvation, it is to be suppos'd, that such Principles are revealed in Scripture, with a Competency of Evidence and Perspicuity. This Observation is founded upon the common Notions Men have of the Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness of God, which make it reasonable to suppose, that what Things God hath made necessary to Men's Felicity, he hath reveal'd them with, so much Clearness, as will leave all Men under the Gospel of ordinary Circumstances and Capacity, unexcusable, if they do not understand them; thus the Prophet *Micah* speaketh, Chap. vi. Ver. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly;*

to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God, Prov. i. 23. Turn ye at my Reproof, behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my Word unto you, Jo. iii. 19. This is the Condemnation that Light is come into the World, Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are Evil. Indeed we must distinguish betwixt the Truth or Certainty of a Scripture-Doctrine, and the *Modus*, or Manner how that Doctrine is to be accounted for; the former is sometimes plainly reveal'd, when the latter is kept as a Mystery; thus it is reveal'd with sufficient Evidence, that there are Three Persons in one God-Head, and that these Three are the same in Substance, equal in Power and Glory; but how these Three are One, is a Mystery it seems not fit to be farther reveal'd to Men in a State of Imperfection; not only these Doctrines which are of absolute Necessity to Salvation, but these that are necessary toward the progressive Sanctification of Christians, are publish'd in the Scripture, with sufficient Perspicuity, tho' not always in express Words of Scripture, yet by Consequences, that by so near the express Propositions, that he that runs may read them, thus these following seem to be plain Scripture-Doctrines, tho' not deliver'd in Scripture Words, viz. That the Infants of such as are Members of the visible Church are to be baptiz'd. That Women as well as Men are to be admitted to the Lord's Table. That the first Day of the Week is the Lord's Day, and ought to be religiously observed as the Christian-Sabbath; tho' these and the like Doctrines, are not to be regarded as absolutely essential to Salvation, yet with many they are justly regarded, as very momentuous Principles, in which the

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Edification and comfortable Communion of Christians are nearly concerned; and there is no Reason to alledge, that because they are not reveal'd in exprefs Scripture Words, but by Consequence only, that therefore they cannot affect publick Communion among Christians, for it is a Principle generally receiv'd in the reformed Churches, that a Doctrine contained in a Scripture Consequence in it self plain, and discernable to these of an ordinary Capacity, is as truly an Article of Faith, as these Doctrines which are exprefs'd in as many Words.

THUS I've shew'd you, *1<sup>st</sup>*. That the Doctrines of the Gospel are connected with the Precepts of Christianity. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, That therefore Scripture-Truths which are after Godliness must be of equal Necessity with Scripture-Precepts, and that a just Way to conceive of the Importance of religious Principles, is to judge of them according to their Connection with christian Practice. *3<sup>dly</sup>*, I have shew'd, that as Scripture-Precepts, so Scripture-Doctrines have a necessary Respect to one another, being severally proportioned to each other, and are to be regarded according to the Place which respectively belongs to them in the Form of sound Words, from the Foundation, to the remotest Part of the Superstructure. *4<sup>thly</sup>*, I've shew'd, that there is just Reason to suppose that Scripture-Doctrines are more or less perspicuously reveal'd, as they are more or less necessary to the Salvation and Well-being of Christians.

THE Truth then intended in my Text, is the Truth of these Doctrines which have an immediate Relation to the great christian Duty of believing in the LORD JESUS CHRIST,



and all other Doctrines, as they are more nearly or remotely connected with christian Practice, and as they are plac'd and reveal'd in holy Scriptures, whether in express Words, or by plain Consequence.

2dly, I am next to enquire what Knowledge of the Truth it is that makes us free. To this Question I answer, That it is not a Knowledge like theirs, who are said, *Rom. ii. 20.* to have only a Form of Knowledge, that is, they have the Truths of Religion some way methodiz'd in their Heads, but never felt the Power of them in their Hearts; but the Knowledge I speak of, is an effectual and solid Persuasion of the Truth as it is in *JESUS*, produced in the Minds of the Children of God, by the supernatural teaching of the holy Ghost, thus *John. xvi. 17.* After Peter in the Name of the Twelve, had declared his Faith concerning *JESUS*, our blessed Saviour, sayeth, *First* *John. xvi. 17.* *Our Father hath not reveal'd it unto thee, but my Father, which is in Heaven, Jo. xvi. 13.* But when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth. Of this Knowledge of the Truth, I observe, *First*, it is real, in Opposition to that which is only Imaginary and Opinionative, which is no other than a meer Conceit of Knowledge. To alledge that all that is necessary to a Man's Acceptance with God, is, "That he be persuaded of the Truth of what he professeth, and the Lawfulness of what he doth, tho' his Persuasion be not really right, and his Sentiments be not exactly agreeable to the Truth." This seems to be a Way of recommending the Knowledge of the



the Truth, that hath a dangerous Tendency to promote Error, and if it be apply'd to our Saviour's Words now before us, will be found to be a plain Perversion of them, making the Sense to be as followeth, "*And ye shall know the Truth*"; that is, ye shall be persuaded "that ye know the Truth, even while ye may be in an Error, and that Mis-persuasion of yours, if you but act according to it, shall make you free, and shall procure to you Acceptance with God, as effectually, as if your Sentiments were exactly agreeable to the Truth." But it is certain, that a Conformity to the Mind of God, in our Sentiments and Practice, is what the Scriptures make necessary to our Acceptance with him, we must prove all Things by divine Revelation, so as to hold fast that which is really good, 1 Thess. v. 21. So saith the Prophet, *Isai. viii. 20. To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because, there is no Light in them.* God hath shew'd us what is Good, with sufficient Plainness, so that if any Man that hath an Opportunity of being better inform'd, shall pronounce that which is Good to be Evil, and that which is Evil to be Good, it must be his own Fault; there is not in all the Scripture, (that I know) an Allowance to act upon a false Principle, in these Things which concern our Acceptance with God. To affirm this, would, in Consequence, be to make the Spirit of Truth the Abettor of Error, which is an Absurdity that no good Man will Digest.

2dly, This Knowledge of the Truth is certain, in Opposition to that which is wavering, and makes a Man halt betwixt two contrary Opinions,

Opinions, a double minded Man is unstable in all his Ways, Ja. i. 8. For whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin, Rom. xiv. 23. But he that knoweth the Truth, *he believes and is sure*, Jo. vi. 69. He is rooted and grounded in the Riches of the full Assurance of Understanding in the Acknowledgement of the Truth, he acquiesceth in the Truth of the Gospel, by the Influence of satisfactory Evidence, *he counts it a faithful Saying, worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ came to the World to save Sinners.* I can't therefore help being Prejudic'd very much against their Way of explaining this Subject, which (to me) tendeth to destroy all Certainty in christian Knowledge, and under a Pretence of Humility, to promote a dangerous Scepticism in the christian Church; 'tis a fallacious Way of Reasoning, because all Men since the Apostles Times are fallible, therefore all Men in their assenting to any Doctrine of Christianity, must leave Room for new Light, and be open to further Conviction, still remembering, that they are subject to mistake in all their Conclusions; this way of Talking, frustrates the great End of the Promises of the Gospel, relating to saving Knowledge, in plain Contradiction to our Saviour's Words in my Text, *And ye shall know the Truth*; No, (say some Modern Authors) ye shall never know the Truth so, but ye may be mistaken at the same Time; whereas our Saviour's Words plainly intimate, that there are certain Evidences and Indications of Truth, to distinguish it from Error, which shall be made effectual to ascertain the Minds of Believers about it, that however fallible they are, yet they may be positive they are not mistaken, but are as sure of the Truth of these momentuous Doctrines of Christianity,

fianity, as the undoubted Evidence of an infallible divine Testimony can make them, and if it was not so that Consolation provided for sincere Christians, which the Spirit of God calls **STRONG**, would be weak and precarious with a Witness, *Heb. vi. 18.* But the grand Mistake of these Authors, I speak of, is this, That they make no Difference betwixt Certainty and Infallibility; whereas, there may be Certainty upon a Sufficiency of moral Evidence, where the Infallibility pretended unto by the *Papists*, is justly disclaimed, otherways the great Principles of *Protestantism*, would be expos'd to the just Contempt of our *Popish* Adversaries, who confidently alledge, there is no Remedy against Scepticism, but in the Infallibility of their Church.

3dly, **THIS** Knowledge is experimental, *Heb. x. 34. Knowing in your selves, that ye have in Heaven, a better and induring Substance.* 1 *Pet. ii. 3. If so be, that ye have TAISTED that the Lord is gracious.* This is the Knowledge that the inspired *Psalmist* so often speaks of, *Psal. li. 6. Behold, thou desirest Truth in the inward Parts, and in THE HIDDEN PARTS, thou shalt make me to know Wisdom.* And in *Psal. xvi. 7. I will bless the Lord who hath given me Counsel, MY REINS also instruct me in the Night-Season.* These who are thus acquainted with the Truth, they are such who by Reason of Use, have their (spiritual) Senses exercised to discern both Good and Evil.

4thly, **THIS** Knowledge is Practical, and such as resolveth in an earnest Affection to the Truth, so that they who understand it, receive it in the Love thereof, and thereby the Truth sinks deep down into their Hearts, and becometh



becometh operative and influential upon the whole Man, they are changed into the same Image, 2. Cor. .iii. 18. Or, as the Apostle expresseth it, Rom. vi. 7. But ye have obeyed from the Heart, that Form of Doctrine, which was delivered you. In the GREEK, it is that Form of Doctrine into which ye were delivered; that is, into the Fashion whereof your Minds were moulded.

3dly, I come next to enquire what Freedom it is that is consequent upon this Knowledge of the Truth. To which I answer, That by our Saviour's Determination, it is not a Liberty to embrace Error, nor a Liberty to act in pursuance of an erroneous Conscience; for he assures us in the plainest Words that it is not Error, but Truth, that it is not acting according to Error, but according to Truth, that makes us free.

THIS Liberty then is a Freedom to that which is Good and Well-pleasing to GOD: As by the Fall of Man we lost all Freedom to what is spiritually Good, so by the saving Knowledge of Christ the second ADAM, we are in part restor'd to our original Freedom, we are made a free or willing People by a Day of his Power. Let us enquire then what we're freed from, and what we are freed unto, by this Liberty.

1st. We're freed from the Dominion of Sin.

2dly, OF SATAN.

3dly, OF the WORLD.

4thly, FROM the condemning and imitating Power of the Law of GOD.

1st. FROM the Dominion of Sin; For, Sin shall not have Dominion over you, (saith the Apostle) Rom. vi. 14. For ye are not under the Law.



*Law, but under Grace.* Where Encouragement is given to these Christians of the Church of R o m e, that tho' Sin might rebel in them, yet it should no more reign in a regenerate Person; and if they did duly strive against it, tho' it would have Existence, yet it should not have Regency in them, because (says he) ye are not under the Law as the Covenant of Works, which strictly requires perfect Obedience, but administers no Strength to perform it; but ye are under a Covenant of Grace, which provides Strength to resist Sin, to overcome it: Subjection to Sin, is a Thralldom of the worst Kind; it is the Subjection of our Reason to our sensual Appetite and brutish Passions, which is a greater Indecency, than to see Beggars ride on Horse-back, and Princes walk on Foot: One in a State of Sin, is a Slave to his own Servants, and to these inferior Appetites, which by their original Constitution, were born to be subject to him; but *Verse 17.* G o d be thanked that ye were the Servants of Sin, but ye have obey'd from the Heart that Form of Doctrine, &c. Here the Apostle does not thank G o d that they were once the Servants of Sin, but he thanks G o d that the Time of that Servitude was over; and that by their believing the Truth of that Form of Doctrine, and obeying it, they had obtained a begun Deliverance from that servile Subjection to Sin; the Increase and Complement whereof, they had good Reason to hope for; it was the End of Christ's Death to stay Sin, and to redeem them from all Iniquity, Tit. ii. 14. There is likewise a new Nature put into the Children of G o d to strengthen them against Sin, 1 Jo. iii. 9. *Whoever is born of God doth not commit Sin, for his Seed remaineth in him,*

*and he cannot sin.* That is his Freedom, consists in his Want of Freedom to sin; it is contrary to his new Nature as a Child of God to offend, and affront his heavenly Father: Believers also have the Promise of the Spirit of God in his sanctifying Influences to assist them in their Warfare against Sin, *Ezek. xxxvi. 26.* Yea, all the great Promises of the Gospel are subservient toward the promoting of their Christian Liberty, and by their knowing the Truth of these Promises, they are made free, *2 Cor. vii. 1.* *Having therefore these Promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.*

2dly, We are free'd from the Dominion of Satan; the first Gospel-Truth which was deliver'd to our first Parents soon after their Fall, was, That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Head of the Serpent, our glorious Redeemer is mightier than the strong Man, *Luke xi. 21.* When Men are brought to the Knowledge of the Gospel, they are said to be turned from Darkness to Light, from the Power of Satan to God; their Deliverance from Error to Truth must be antecedent to their Deliverance from Satan to God.

THERE is a most comfortable Promise directed to the believing *Romans*, Chap. xvi. 20. *And the God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your Feet shortly.* If we consider these Words in their Connection with the preceeding Verse, then by Satan we are to understand the false Teachers, of whom he warns them to Mark them who cause Divisions; giving them to know that such Seducers, are the Instruments of Satan, in propagating Errors, nevertheless, *evangelical*

evangelical Truth shall be finally victorious, the Head of Error shall fall low at last, at the Feet of Truth : False Teachers may Bluster for a Time, but they shall be bruised at last : From this Promise we are assured that the Reconciler of the World will subdue *Satan* shortly, and in subduing him, will conquer all his Instruments ; he says not, *GOD* will bruise *Hereticks*, but *Satan*, for in the Fall of the General, the whole Army is put to the Rout. *Rev. xii. 11.* The Saints are said to overcome *Satan* by the *Blood of the Lamb*, and the *Word of their Testimony*. That is, by their constant Adherence to the Doctrine of a crucify'd Jesus ; such is the Freedom from *Satan's* Power, purchased for sincere Christians, that they are without Excuse, if they do not resist him, being steadfast in the Faith of the Gospel, putting on the whole Armour of *GOD*, two considerable Parts whereof, are the Shield of Faith, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God that is the Word of Truth.

3dly, We are free'd from the Dominion of the World, by which I understand, 1st. The Influence of the Snares and Inticements of the Things of this World. 2dly, The unjust Usurpation of Men over our Consciences. 1st. We are free'd from the undue Influence of the Things of this World, 1 *Jo. ii. 15.* *Love not the World, neither the Things that are in the World ; for if any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* Which is to be understood of an inordinate Love of the World, which is mortify'd in all that believe the Truth : the Apostle *P A U L* represents his Liberty, as consisting in his being crucify'd to the World, and the World was crucify'd to him, and how



this Freedom is attain'd, the Apostle JOHN informs us, 1 Jo. v. 4. *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*, where it may be observed, that the Christian who is a Soldier, as soon as he is a Believer, is a Conqueror as soon as he is a Soldier, and even while he is in the Fight, hath his Enemy under his Feet, Rev. xii. 1. Where by the Woman we are to understand, the Christian Church, she is cloathed with the Sun, that is, she is adorned with the Graces of the Spirit of Christ; she hath the Moon under her Feet, which implies her being enabled by divine Grace to despise the Insults and Affronts of the World, and to trample upon its most enticing Enjoyments and Satisfactions. The Christian being enabled to conquer himself, conquers all the World round him, whereby his Conquest is more considerable, than that of the greatest Conquerors, whose Conquests have been so much celebrated in all Ages; their Dominion reach'd but to a few Kingdoms, the Christians is over the World it self, these Conquerors, while they conquer'd Abroad, they were Slaves at Home, while they were Lords of Nations, were not Masters of themselves, but were Vassals to their own Lusts, but the Christian begins his Victories at Home, and enlargeth his Triumphs over all his Enemies Abroad.

2dly, We are free'd from the Dominion of Men over our Faith and Consciences. The Apostle PETER, 1 Pe. v. 3. directs Ministers not to carry it towards their Flocks, as Lords over God's Heritage, but as Examples to the Flock, and the Apostle Paul solemnly disclaims this despotick Power over the Faith of Christians, 1 Cor. i. 24. *Not for that we have*

have Dominion over your Faith. It is certain, that in our Faith and Practice we are not to be determin'd by the Doctrines and Commandments of Men, but by the Doctrines and Commandments of Christ; this Branch of Christian Liberty is excellently well explain'd in our Confession, in Opposition to sundry dangerous Errors, *Ch. 20. Sect. 2, 3, 4.* In the second Section we are told, That God is the only Lord of the Conscience, and hath left it free from the Doctrines and Commandments of Men, which are in any Thing contrary to his Word, or beside it in Matters of Faith and Worship; here we must observe that this Liberty of Conscience is limited by the Word of God; in the second Section, Conscience is left free from the Authority of Men, in any Thing which they command contrary to the Word of God; but if these who are in lawful Authority over us, command nothing that is either contrary unto, or beside the Scripture in Matters of Faith and Practice, but command what Christ commandeth, in this Case to say that Men are left free to disobey the Commandments of CHRIST, when they are apply'd and put in Execution, by Men to whom he hath given a Power to command what HE COMMANDETH, seems to have a visible Tendency to encourage Licentiousness, and such an unbounded pretended Liberty of Conscience, as hath been oppos'd strenuously by the ablest Presbyterian Writers, as appears by the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which is so far from countenancing such a Liberty, that it expressly remonstrates against it in these or the like Words. "These who upon Pretence of Christian Liberty do practise any Sin, or cherish any Lust,

do thereby destroy the End of Christian Liberty, and because the Powers ordained of God, either in Church or State, and the Liberty Christ hath purchased, are not intended of God to destroy, but mutually to preserve one another; they are guilty of a great Abuse of Christian Liberty, who oppose the lawful Exercise of these Powers, and for their publishing such Opinions as are destructive to Christianity, and the Power of Godliness, or Principles, which either in their own Nature, or in the Manner of maintaining and publishing them, are inconsistent with that external Peace and Order which Christ hath establish'd in his Church, such Persons may lawfully be proceeded against, by the Censures of the Church, and by the Power of the civil Magistrate."

THESE Propositions, tho' I will not say they are fundamental Articles, yet I can't help regarding them as Scripture-Doctrines, of great Importance for the Credit, the Peace and Purity of the Church, in which I'm concerned: As I earnestly detest all Principles which countenance Persecution, or arbitrary Impositions; so I as much dislike: Upon the other Hand, all Principles which evidently tend to subvert all regular Administration, both Civil and Ecclesiastical.

4thly, THE Truth makes us free from the Law not as a Rule of Life, for in that Respect, the Obligations which all Men are under, by the Moral Law, are inviolable, many of these moral Precepts, being so self-evident, that Men cannot be supposed to have the Exercise of their Reason, unless they be sensible in some Measure, of the Reasonableness, and binding Force



of these Laws, but we are free'd from the Moral Law as a Covenant of Works, which is the Covenant that gendereth to Bondage, *Gal. iv. 24.* because it obligeth a Man to perfect Obedience upon the Pain of eternal Damnation, which Righteousness it is impossible for him to attain without an Interest in another Covenant, which provides Righteousness and Redemption to believing Penitents.

WE are free'd also from that which some call the Irritation of the Law, not that the holy Law of GOD, hath any Tendency in its own Nature to irritate Sin, or provock to it, but as the Apostle explains it, *Rom. vii. 8. Sin taking Occasion by the Commandment, wrought in me all manner of Concupiscence.* That is, tho' he had said before, that the Law of GOD could not be the formal Cause of Sin; yet here he owns, that Sin was the accidental Event of the Law, through the Depravity of our Nature: Sin in us is stirred up more strongly, by being restrain'd by the Law; the more Sin is oppos'd, the more it is provock'd, like a Torrent when it is dammed up, and obstructed in its natural Course, it becomes the more impetuous and outrageous; but by the Knowledge of the Truth, as it is in CHRIST, we are in some Measure free'd from this accidental Effect of the divine Law, as far as we are by regenerating Grace, reconciled to the divine Precepts, and made to think and say of 'em with the Apostle, *Rom. vii. 22. Wherefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment is holy, Just and Good.* And tho' he found a Law in his Members warring against the Law of his Mind, yet he could say, *Verse 22. I delight in the Law of God, after the inward Man.* And *Verse*

Verse 25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, so then with my Mind I serve the Law of God.*

Lastly, We are free'd from the condemning Power of the Law, Rom. viii. 1. *There is therefore now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* And in consequence of this Breach of Christian Liberty, we are deliver'd from the vindictive Wrath of God, whereby the Sting is taken out of all our Afflictions in this Life, and they cease from being legal Punishments in a strict Sense, and become fatherly Corrections, subservient to our great Advantage.

The Sting is also taken out of Death, and we are free'd from the Dominion of the Grave, so that the sincere Christian may apply that glorious Triumph, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law. But thanks be to God which gives us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* And to compleat all, we are free'd from the Wrath to come; that is, the Punishment of Sin in another Life, the Punishment both of Loss and of Sense, from that eternal Weeping, and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth, which is abiding them who know not God and the Truth, and disobey the Gospel, the divine Warrant issued out for our Arrest and Commitment to this Place of dreadful Torment, is taken up at the Instance and Expence of our glorious Surety and Advocate with the Father, who appears before God for us. Thus far I have consider'd what we are free'd from, by the Knowledge of the Truth,

Truth, I am next to consider what we are freed unto. And,

1<sup>st</sup>. We are at Liberty to exercise all the Christian Virtues, whether these which are called by some, DIVINE Virtues, which respect that Devotion which we owe to GOD, the FATHER, SON, and Holy GHOST, they are reducible to these following Particulars.

FREQUENTLY to think of, and contemplate the Beauty and Perfections of GOD.

UPON the Account of these Perfections, humbly to worship and adore him.

ARDENTLY to Love, and to take Complacency in him.

ATTENTIVELY and unweariedly to imitate him, in all his imitable Perfections and Actions.

INTIRELY to resign up our selves to his Conduct and Disposal.

CHEARFULLY to depend and to rely upon him in all Things, living and dying for Grace and Glory.

OR, whether they be these Virtues which are called HUMAN, as belonging to a Man, in the Capacity of a rational Animal, which are reducible to these following, viz.

THE Virtue of Christian Prudence, which consists in our being duly guided by divine Grace, to propose to our selves the worthiest Ends, and directed to the fittest Means for obtaining them.

CHRISTIAN Moderation, which consists in our proportioning our concupiscible Affections, to the just Worth and Value of Things.

CHRISTIAN Fortitude, which consists in keeping our Irascible Affections, i. e. our Fear,



Fear, Anger, Hatred, Revenge, &c. within due Bounds; is difficult Cases, and dangerous Undertakings.

**CHRISTIAN** Temperance, which consists in keeping our Bodily Appetites, Eating, Drinking, &c. within the Bounds prescrib'd by the Word of God.

**CHRISTIAN** Humility, which consists in our not valuing our selves beyond what is due and just, upon the account of any Good we're possess'd of, whether external or internal.

**O**r, whether these Virtues be such as belong to Men in an associated Capacity with one another, and therefore are called **SOCIAL** Virtues, such as,

**O**ur being charitably dispos'd toward one another.

**T**HAT we be Just and Righteous in all our Intercourses with each other.

**T**HAT we behave our selves peaceably in our respective States and Relations.

**T**HAT we be very Modest in our Behaviour toward our Superiors.

**T**HAT we be duly Affable and Condescending to our Inferiors.

**T**HIS free and lively Exercise of these Virtues, is a natural Consequence of the Knowledge of the Truth of the Gospel, as is plain from Col. i. 5, 6. — *In the Word of the Truth of the Gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the World, and bringeth forth Fruit, as it doth also in you since the Day ye heard of it, and knew the Grace of God in Truth.* This Apostle Philip i. 9, 10. prayed for these Philippians, that their Love might abound yet more and more in all knowledge, and in all Judgment, that they might approve

*approve Things that are excellent:* In that remarkable Detail which the Apostle *Peter* gives of Christian Virtues, we will find Faith at the Head of them; *add to your Faith Virtue, &c.* Thus the Knowledge of the Truth promotes the Exercise of Virtue, by setting the Scripture-Arguments for a holy Life in a clear Light; and as an Increase of the Knowledge of the Truth, causeth an Increase of Holiness, so the diligent Exercise of the Christian Virtues, resolves in an Increase of Christian Knowledge, *John vii. 17.* If any Man will do the Will of **CHRIST**, he shall know his Doctrine.

2<sup>dly</sup>, We're free'd to a ready Performance of the Duties of Religion, especially these which belong to the Worship of **GOD**; in Prayer we have Access to **GOD** by Faith in *Jesus Christ*, *Rom. v. 2.* or as he expresseth it, *Eph. iii. 12.* In whom we have Boldness and Access with Confidence, by the Faith of him: **ABSLON** was pardon'd his Crime; but had not Access to his Father's Presence, but by believing in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, we not only are pardoned, but allow'd free Access to a reconciled **GOD**.

**THERE** is not only a Freedom of Access, but of Utterance also, *Gal. iv. 6.* Because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying *Abba Father*. Thus the Spirit helps our Infirmities in Prayer, *Rom viii. 26.* The Spirit of Christ, and our own Spirits, must both do their part in Prayer, we must not imagine that the Words of our Prayers are immediately dictated by the holy Ghost, neither are we to mistake a frothy Eloquence or great Freedom, or Fluency in affected Expressions in Prayer for the Assistance of the Spirit,

but the Spirit of Grace powerfully excites in us all the Graces that are proper for the Exercise of Prayer, and thereby he enables us to speak in Prayer with Freedom, out of the fullness of the Heart, and when we cannot speak, he enables us to vent our Desires, in Groans that cannot be uttered: He shews us our Sins, and thereby gives us great Freedom in **CONFESSION**: He shews us our Wants, and thereby affords us plentiful Matter of Petition: He shews us the Promises, and thereby fills our Mouths with Arguments: He shews to us our Mercies, and thereby opens our closed Lips, and makes us free to Praise him: He shews us the Churches Necessities, and makes *Jerusalem* come into our Mind, and thereby affords us Matter of abundant Intercession.

Our knowing the Truth promotes our Freedom in attending to the Word of GOD, both in Reading and Hearing. It is said of *Lydia*, *Acts* xvi. 14. That when the Lord opened her Heart, *she attended to the Things spoken by Paul*; and tho' she was a Seller of Purple, or of fine Commodities, yet she allowed of no vain Thoughts about them in Time of Sermon, but heard the Apostle without Distraction, her Heart did not go after her Covetousness, with *Ezekiel's* Hearers, *Ezek.* xxxiii. 33. but after the great Things of God which were deliver'd to her by the Preacher. Never was a Lecture on the Scriptures preach'd and hear'd with more Liberty, then that which is mention'd, *Luke* 24. concerning which it was observed by the Hearers, *Ver.* 32. Did not our Hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the Way, and open'd to us the Scriptures: O what blessed Liberty there is in hearing! When the Heart



Heart and the Scriptures are both open'd together by him, who can open and no Man can shut. In Verse 45. 'tis said, *Then open'd he their Understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.* A due Persuasion of the Truths of the Gospel, gives the Word of the LORD a free Course, so that it is glorify'd in the powerful Influence it hath upon the Hearts and Lives of the Hearers, and by the same Influence these who preach the Gospel faithfully, must use great Freedom of Speech, and speak boldly as they ought to speak: The Preachers in the primitive Times, spoke because they believed, how could they but speak the Things which they saw and heard, *Acts iv. 20.* knowing the Terror of the LORD, they persuaded Men and besought them to be reconciled to GOD, *2 Cor. vi. 11.* *O ye CORINTHIANS, our Mouth is open unto you, our Heart is enlarged:* It is by the Influence of the Truth that good Men, find great Intargements of Soul, in attending the Solemnities of the Gospel, where the Spirit of the LORD is, there is Liberty, *2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.* The Vail being taken away, a glorious Scene opens to the enlighten'd Minds of devote Christians, upon such Occasions they are said to sit down under his Shadow with great Delight: They are glad when they are called to go into the House of GOD, being made joyful in the House of Prayer, for 'tis there especially, that his free Spirit, or the Spirit of Freedom sustains them. Thus it is, that in Proportion to our Attainments in the saving Knowledge of the Truth, we are at Liberty in performing all the reasonable Service we owe either to GOD or Man, we walk at Liberty, our Hearts being enlarged, we run the Way of GOD's, Commandments.

ably, I come in the last Place, to shew how the Knowledge of the Truth resolveth in Christian Liberty. I shall lay the less upon this Head of Discourse, that so much hath been already offered occasionally to this Purpose: Tho' it could not be demonstrated, whence it is that the Truth makes us free; yet to every sincere Christian, it is Demonstration enough of this Truth, that our *Lord Jesus Christ*, who is the true G O D, hath said it is so. But still the Connection betwixt the saving Knowledge of Truth and Christian Liberty, seems to be so clearly represented in Scripture, that it may be the easiest to account for it. And 1<sup>st</sup>. The best Discription of Freedom in General, that I have seen, is, That it consists in the Mind's taking Complacency in its own Choice of what is good, under the Direction of right Reason; for where there is no Understanding, there can be no Liberty: When Man was in a State of Perfection, he was perfect in his Understanding; and the Subjection of his Will, and all the inferior Faculties, to the Dictates of his unprejudic'd and unclouded Judgment, made him perfectly free in all his Actions as a rational Creature.

Thus holy Angels, and Spirits of just Men made perfect, they do the Will of G O D with a perfect Freedom, that is, they perfectly know and obey the Will of G O D, and the perfect Complacency of their Obedience, is a necessary Consequent of the Perfection of their Knowledge: Man in a State of Grace, is so far restor'd to Liberty, as he is regenerated in the whole Man; the Freedom of his sanctify'd Will is proportion'd to the Measure of his sanctify'd Understanding; the more he knows Things

Things that are excellent, the more freely and fully he approve of them; *Phil. i. 9, 10.* The good Men are often chargeable with acting in Contradiction to their Light; it doth not thence follow, that their Light is not naturally productive of their Liberty, only it infers, that they are not yet perfect either in knowing, willing, or doing what is spiritually good; and so far as by the Motions of Sin, or the Influence of Temptations from the Devil and the World, the Christian acts in Contradiction to the Dictates of a good Conscience and sanctify'd Judgment, for he acts without Liberty, as is plain in the Account the Apostle gives of his Case, *Rom. vii. 15, 19.* *For that which I do I allow not, (in the GOOD it is I know not) for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I.* The natural Tendency of all saving Knowledge, is to promote Liberty in doing Good; whatever accidental Obstructions the Influence of that Light may meet with; Grace does not destroy but perfect the Order of our rational Powers, and a Christian in his Obedience to the Will of God, acts rationally upon Principles and Persuasion, but because it is not the mere Persuasion abstractedly consider'd, but the Conformity of his Persuasion to the Truth of the Propositions contained in the Law of God, that makes him free, instead of saying, That religious Obedience is founded merely in PERSONAL PERSUASION; I choose rather to say, That the Freedom of a Christian in his religious Obedience, is founded in the Conformity of his Sentiments to divine Revelation; for while a Man acts according to an erring Conscience, whatever Freedom he hath in his Obedience, his acting so,



wants an essential Property of Freedom; i. e. The Knowledge of the Truth, and consequently, it is not Christian Freedom, but a mistaken Con-  
 doit, for which he needs Forgiveness, as they did, who being under the powerful Influence of an erroneous Persuasion, and acting according to it, Christ pray'd for them; *Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.*

Truly, it is agreeable to the Method of di-  
 vine Grace towards Men; First, To reach  
 them what Things God hath commanded,  
 thereby to determine them to the free and  
 cheerful Observance of them; the Spirit of  
 God's self leads us into all Truth; and the  
 Truth triumphs over all our Mis-persuasions,  
 for the reaching I speak of is mighty, to the pul-  
 ling down of strong Holds, casting down Imaginati-  
 ons, and every high Thing that exalteth it self a-  
 gainst the Knowledge of God, and bringing into  
 Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ;  
 and of Truth; 1 Cor. x. 4. 5. To conclude,  
 The Influence which the Knowledge of the  
 Truth hath upon Christian Liberty, may be  
 accounted for, from a due Consideration of the  
 Properties of that Knowledge which I have  
 before mention'd, such as, 1<sup>st</sup> It is real and  
 not imaginary, and therefore it must have real  
 Effects; if it be the Knowledge of the Truths  
 which are after God's will, it must be produc-  
 tive of real Freedom, in the Exercise of a holy  
 Life. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It is a certain and sure Know-  
 ledge of the Truth; and the greater Assurance  
 the Mind hath concerning the Truths of the  
 Gospel, the Arguments for a godly Conver-  
 sion must be the more powerfully determin-  
 ing. 3<sup>dly</sup>, This Knowledge of the Truth  
 is experimental, which makes the Evidence

the more satisfactory; and consequently, the Influence of such Knowledge must be the more effectual: 4<sup>thly</sup>. This Knowledge is such as transforms the Mind, and by that Means, the Obedience which is consequent upon it, must be the more natural and free.

## I N F E R E N C E I.

THIS Doctrine reproacheth them who depreciate any of these Doctrines which are according to Godliness, representing them as Matters of meer Speculation, and consequently of no Importance to religious Communion, calling them disputable Points, wherein good Men may differ without Disadvantage: SATAN hath been industrious in all Ages, and is so still, to cheapen the Truths of the Gospel, on purpose to promote the Sale of as many of 'em as he can, knowing that the Tendency of these Principles is to diminish and destroy his Empire among Men; but the Spirit of God assures us, that every Truth that is profitable in any Degree for Instruction in Righteousness, is of such Moment and Value, that we are strictly injoin'd by divine Counsel, to purchase it at any Price, but to sell it at none, *Prov. xxiii. 23, Buy the Truth and sell it not.*

## I N F E R E N C E II.

We may be directed by what hath been observed, what Judgment to make of some Notions of Christian Liberty, which so much obtain in these Times, according to this new Scheme of Christian Liberty, (which by the by is no other than the old *Satanic* Scheme revived)

very Man must be at full Liberty to maintain and publish his own Principles, be they ever so contrary to the Truths which are after Godliness, no Restraints must be put upon them, who deny the Supreme Deity of our Saviour, more than them that own it, upon them that deny the divine Institution of the two Sacraments of the New Testament, or them who deny the Christian-Sabbath, more than upon them who own these Doctrines: By this Scheme the Christian Magistrate hath no Right to establish and incourage one Religion more than another, the *Christian* more than the *Mahometan*, but he is to take Care of the State or civil Affairs only, these Assemblies call'd *SYNODS*, have no Authority over the Members of a Church, but what every Man's private Judgment, whether it be Right or Wrong gives them. These and the like Principles are the glorious Cause of Liberty, pleaded for by some of the greatest Pretenders to Learning and Zeal for the *Protestant* Religion; but with many sincere Lovers of Truth and Reformation, such Principles are a Reproach to the *Protestant* Name, they are the very Principles which the *Papist* Emisaries are instructed from the Conclave at Rome, to disseminate among *Protestants*, one purpose to ruin the *Protestant* Interest. † But blessed be God, that in the worst of Times, Wisdom is justify'd of her Children; and that we are so clearly taught by him who is Truth it self, that the Cause of Gospel Truth, and the Cause of Christian Liberty, are so inseparably united, that they must stand and fall together.

### IN F E R E N C E III.

† Protestant Remonstr.



THEIR Case is much to be lamented, who in a Land of Light are under the Power of Darkness and Error; Ignorance and Immorality are as inseparable from one another, as are their Contraries the Knowledge of the Truth, and a holy Life: If according to our Saviour's Words, the Knowledge of the Truth is productive of Liberty, by a most evident Consequence, Error and Ignorance must be productive of a baneful Bondage; the Gall of bitter Errors is the necessary Antecedent of the Bond of Iniquity. This is agreeable to the Reasoning of the Apostle to the Ephesians, Chap. iv. 17, 18, 19. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the Vanity of their Mind. Having the Understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, by the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Heart. Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleaness with Greediness. Verse 20. But ye have not so learned Christ.*

#### INFERENCE IV.

It must be the great Happiness of any Church where the Knowledge of the Truths of the Gospel doth flourish, by the painful Labours of their faithful Pastors, of whom it may be said as in *Mal. ii. 5. My Covenant was with him of Life and Peace, and I gave them to him for the Fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my Name. Ver. 6. The Law of Truth was in his Mouth, and Iniquity was not found in his Lips; he walked with me in Peace and Equity, and did turn many away from Iniquity. Ver. 7. For*

the Priests Lips should keep Knowledge, and they should seek the Law in his Mouth, for he is the Messenger of the LORD of Hosts. The Messengers of Christ under the Old as well as New Testament, were commission'd to preach the Truths of God as they were delivered to them, it was by the Law of Truth in their Mouth, that they turn'd many away from Iniquity. Unless they had agreed in the publick Profession of a competent Number of divine Doctrines, contain'd in that Law of Truth, the People could not have sought the Knowledge of sound Principles at their Lips, neither could the Priests themselves have walk'd with God, and with one another in Peace and Equity.

Which plainly sheweth, that the Pastors of every reformed Church, have a good Warrant for their uniting in some publick Collection of Gospel Truths, and for their making the due Profession of Adherence to a competent Number of these Truths, the Condition of their stated ministerial Communion together; yea, to enter into solemn Agreement to stand for the Defence of these particular Doctrines of the Gospel, in Opposition to dangerous Errors, which tend to promote Ungodliness, and where such Agreements are by any, either refus'd, or violated after they have been stipulated, it must needs affect the publick Communion of such a Church to great Disadvantage.

#### INFERENCE V.

THERE is great Reason for our united Acknowledgments of the unmerited and distinguishing Goodness of God, to the reformed Churches, especially to Great Britain and Ireland, in delivering us from the Bondage of Popish Errors, the Bondage of the Soul is much more

more Pernicious than that of the Body, our Deliverance therefore from Error is more important, than our Deliverance from any external Hardships; but seeing our happy Reformation deliver'd us from tyrannical Incroachments, both upon our sacred and civil Liberties, our Obligations are thereby the more enhanced, to put a due Value upon these re-form'd Principles, to hold them fast till the coming of CHRIST, and not to regard them as Matters of doubtful Disputation; but to consider with what pious Zeal, with how much fervent Prayer to the God of Truth, with how much Labour and Study, with how much Expence of their Blood and Treasure, our worthy Progenitors transmitted these Principles to us, that we may not sell these Truths unworthily, which they so generously bought, but may rather strive to imitate, yea, to out-do them in being constant and valiant for the Truth, while there are such threatening Combinations to cast it down to the Ground, *Dan. viii. 12.* No doubt it is our indispensable Duty, in Imitation of the noble BERGANS, to prove all Doctrines by the Touch-stone of the holy Scriptures, whoever recommended them to us, whether Antients or Moderns; but when upon due Enquiry, we find that the Principles deliver'd us by our Fathers, are no other than these which they receiv'd of the LORD, we are not the less, but the more obliged to be zealous in contending for the Faith that it was once delivered to the Saints, to be faithfully kept as a Trust, and transmitted from one Generation to another, *Jude. i. v. 10.*



We may be directed by what hath been ad-  
 vanc'd, to find out the true Cause of the re-  
 markable Decay of true Christian Liberty.  
 By *Liberty* (be sure) I don't mean a bound-  
 less Freedom to every Man to speak and do  
 what he pleaseth in all Matters of Religion,  
 according to what he calls his best Light and  
 private Judgment; the more of this Liberty  
 hath obtain'd of late, the less true Christian  
 Liberty hath taken Place; but what my Noti-  
 ons of Liberty are, I have before intimated,  
 under the third Head of Discourse, however  
 much we are priviledg'd with external Liberty,  
 by the good Providence of God, and the  
 gentle and wise Administration of our civil Go-  
 vernours; yet 'tis much to be fear'd, that our  
 inward Liberty is under a very dismal Declen-  
 sion; this is own'd and lamented, by these of  
 the best Taste in serious Religion, that it is  
 not with us as in former Times, when many  
 were made willing by a Day of CHRIST'S  
 Power, when it pleas'd GOD to enlarge the  
 Hearts both of Preachers and Hearers, which  
 made them glad to attend upon Gospel Mi-  
 nistrations, under great external Inconveni-  
 encies, the Danger of Fines, Imprisonment, Dra-  
 gooning, Banishment, yea of all manner of  
 Cruelties, did not intimidate them from a sted-  
 fast adherence to the Truths of Christ, the  
 Light of God's Countenance lifted up upon  
 his Servants, did more than ballance all the  
 Discouragement they were under from Men.  
 But how much is that inward Liberty gone?  
 When we have not, many of us, so much as  
 Liberty to bemoan our want of Liberty:  
 What is likelier to be the Cause of so much  
 Deadness and Bondage, then our falling from  
 our

our first Love, to our G O D, to our Principles, and to one another; what Truths were formerly look'd upon as according to Goodness, and Peace, are now regarded by too many, as Principles tending to Strife, and every evil Work. Some Ministers have not Liberty to maintain stated Ministerial Communion as formerly, with others, because they can't agree what Gospel Truths shall be made the Terms of that Communion; these upon one Side, propose to have all the Doctrines in the publick C O N F E S S I O N to be the Terms of Communion; these upon the other Side, have loudly complain'd of this, as a criminal narrowing of Ministerial Communion, as if they would say, the larger the Number is of Scripture Truths, that is put into the Condition of external Ministerial Communion, the Foundation of such Communion is thereby made the narrower; so that no Agreement is likely to be compass'd unless both Parties agree to differ, that is, not to agree at all.

T H I S at present is the State of our Liberty, while our Well-wishers are lamenting our In-satuation, and our Enemies are laughing among themselves, which gives all of us just Reason to search and try our Ways, and to turn again to the L O R D, to cry mightily to the G O D of Peace and Truth, to revive us yet again, that we may rejoice in the L O R D, and in his Word, and in one another, at least with the same Liberty as formerly.

#### I N F E R E N C E V I I .

How happy are they who in these evil Times, are priviledg'd with the saving Knowledge of the Truth, especially these Truths which are necessary to an Interest in Jesus Christ, so that it is given to know the Mysteries of his Kingdom.

while to others these Things are spoken in Parables. They who are possess'd of this excellent Knowledge are of an excellent Spirit, however despis'd by Men, they are the excellent Ones in the Earth, the only free People in the World, a People of peculiar Immunities, Subjects of a Kingdom, in which all the Subjects are Kings Citizens of the new JERUSALEM, their Conversation and Freedom is in Heaven, whence they are free Born, and yet their Freedom was purchas'd with a great Sum, the invaluable Price of the Blood of Christ.

How much then doth it concern us to examine our selves, concerning our Love to divine Truths, which will insure to us so much Liberty, even the Liberty of the Sons of GOD. Let us enquire then what Taste we have of the Sweetness of these Truths, what Sense we have of the Savour of the Knowledge of CHRIST, what Exercise have we been under to find this Pearl of great Price, and what Opposition have we met with from the Father of Lies and Evil, in our Endeavours to be established in our religious Principles. While People are easy and indifferent about their Principles, or rest in a vain form of Knowledge, Satan gives them very little terrible Disturbance, but as soon as they begin to be in earnest in laying to Heart the Truths of the Gospel, he pours in upon them his fiery Darts, and endeavours to shake the very Foundation, and to controvert every Thing in Religion, the most important Articles of Christianity not excepted, but that Old Serpent loathes his Hellish, for the more that Good Christians are tempted to disbelieve the Truths of the Gospel, the more furious they are to be bent up in their most



holy Faith: Satan gives Opposition to the Truth, by Instruments the fittest for his Purpose he can find, by them the Truth is darkened, by their artful Perversions of Scripture Texts, but even herein the Wiles of the Devil are defeated, for the more that Gospel-Truths are disputed by Men of Learning, the more earnest are serious Christians to study these Points upon their Knees, supplicating the Father of Lights, that he *would reveal even this unto them, that their Faith may not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of GOD:* And that they may be preserved from Error, and from being offended at the Truth, by means of the frightful and shameful Differences among Divines; and by this Means, private Christians (some of them) are more establish'd in their religious Principles, and less tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine, than some who are much Conversant with the Controversies among the Learned; tho' 'tis to be fear'd still, many in a Time of Divisions in the Church, are led away from the Truth, unsound Professors are discover'd, and their secret Disinclination to good Principles are made manifest.

Let us be exhorted then, first to double our Diligence, in our Endeavours to be establish'd in the Knowledge and Belief, *First*, Of the great fundamental Truths of the Gospel, and next, of all other Truths which are after Godliness in their own Order; we ought to consider how much intrinsick Beauty there is in divine Truths, which when set in a due Light, will captivate our Minds, and secure us from that Giddiness in religious Principles, which is so much the Plague of our

Times. Let us consider the encouraging Promises of the Gospel, concerning the necessary Aids of the Spirit of Wisdom, both to lead us to the Truth, and keep us in it, whose Teaching is sufficient to reveal these Things to Babes, which are hid from the Wise and Prudent.

Let us consider the infinite Advantages which will attend a due Adherence to the TRUTH, what comfortable Liberty we shall have in the Exercise of all the Christian Virtues, and all the Duties of our respective Stations, especially in a publick Capacity; did these who Preach the Gospel to others duly understand and believe the Doctrines they deliver, how fervent would they be in their solicitous Endeavours to win Souls to CHRIST; what glorious Days of the Gospel might we have, if the Truths of Christianity were more effectually ponder'd and made use of, how much would we be animated, to confess these Truths of Christ before Men, and to render a Reason of the hope that in us, without any shuffling Excuses; how useful and comfortable might we be to one another, in our stated or occasional Converses together; how far would we be from Biting and Devouring one another, and how forward to promote one anothers Interest in every Respect; how much would that Charity Flourish, which rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth; how could we exert our selves, in doing all the good Offices in our Power to these who are of Sentiments contrary to ours in Religion, and endeavour by all Gospel Methods, to receive them in the Spirit of Meekness, from the Error of their Way. In a word, if we know the Truth as it is in JESUS, what

what blessed Liberty would we have in walking as CHRIST walked, in speaking as he spoke, in doing good to all Men, and forgiving our Enemies as he did, in being Merciful, Meek, Patient, Prudent, Humble, and Temperate in all Things as he was.

2dly, Let us adorn the Doctrine of Christ; this is a faithful Saying, and these Things I will that thou affirm constantly (says the Apostle to Titus), that they who have believed in God, be careful to maintain good Works, these Things are good and profitable to Men: Let ours also learn to maintain good Works for necessary Uses, that they be not unfruitful. Ah how much Prejudice and Dishonour hath been done to good Principles by the evil Manners of these who have profess'd them! With what an ill Grace was it that the Prophane Jews in the Prophet Jeremiah's Time? Jer. 7. 4. said, the Temple of the Lord are these, three Times over. And with what better Grace, do too many now make mention of the Purity of their Profession and Principles, while in Works they deny and disparage them, trust ye not in lying Words, will you Steal, Murder, and commit Adultery, Lie and Slander, and do every Thing that is Wicked, and come and stand before me, and say, we are delivered from many dangerous Errors, to do all these Abominations? No says the Lord, if ye persist in your evil Practises, I will cast you out of my Sight, and the rather because ye have sham'd and affronted the best of Principles by the worst of Practises: If some Men's Creed were collected from their ordinary way of speaking and acting; What monstrous Articles would such Creeds consist of? But I am persuaded better Things of you, and Things



that accompany Christian-Liberty, and not the Liberty of Heathens and Enemies to the Cross of Christ; What remains then but that we should grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, being called to Liberty, let us not use our Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh, but by Love serve one another, Gal. v. 13. As free, not using our Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciousness, but as the Servants of God, 1 Pet. ii. 16. Let us have our Conversation so as those of the contrary Party may be ashamed, having no Evil to say of us, Tit. ii. 8. Let us as much as in us lyes follow Peace with all Men, and so behave, that we may obtain a good Report of all Men, and of the Truth it self. Let us pray fervently to be establish'd in the present Truth, and that Liberty founded in the Truth of the Gospel may be more and more increased in all the reformed Churches, both at Home and Abroad.

FINIS.



